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# Insights into hours worked, August 2021

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**Source:** [Labour Force, Australia, August 2021](#)

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The ABS previously indicated its intention to cease publishing this article every month after the May 2021 issue (on 17 June 2021), and to only publish future updates as needed. Given the current lockdowns and other restrictions, the ABS intends to continue to publish further articles each month until changes in hours worked series return to pre-COVID conditions.

The August survey reference period was from 1 August to 14 August 2021. The Greater Sydney Lockdown began on 26 June, extended to the Hunter and Armadale regions on 5 August, the Tamworth and Byron Bay regions on 9 August and the rest of New South Wales on 15 August. The sixth Victorian lockdown began on 5 August, with restrictions easing in Regional Victoria on 10 August. South East Queensland was in lockdown from 31 July to 8 August. Cairns and Yarrabah region were in lockdown from 8 to 11 August. The lockdown in the Australian Capital Territory commenced on 12 August 2021, just prior to the end of the reference period.

## Hours worked and employment

Hours worked decreased by 3.7% (in seasonally adjusted terms) between July and August 2021, while employment decreased by 1.1% or 146,300 people. The fall in hours worked followed falls of 1.8% in June and 0.2% in July, reflecting the increase in lockdowns and other restrictions during this period.

Chart 1 shows changes in hours worked and employment, indexed to March 2020, while Chart 2 shows monthly changes in hours worked and employment since August 2017.

**Chart 1: Hours worked and employment index, Seasonally adjusted (March 2020 = 100.0)**



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

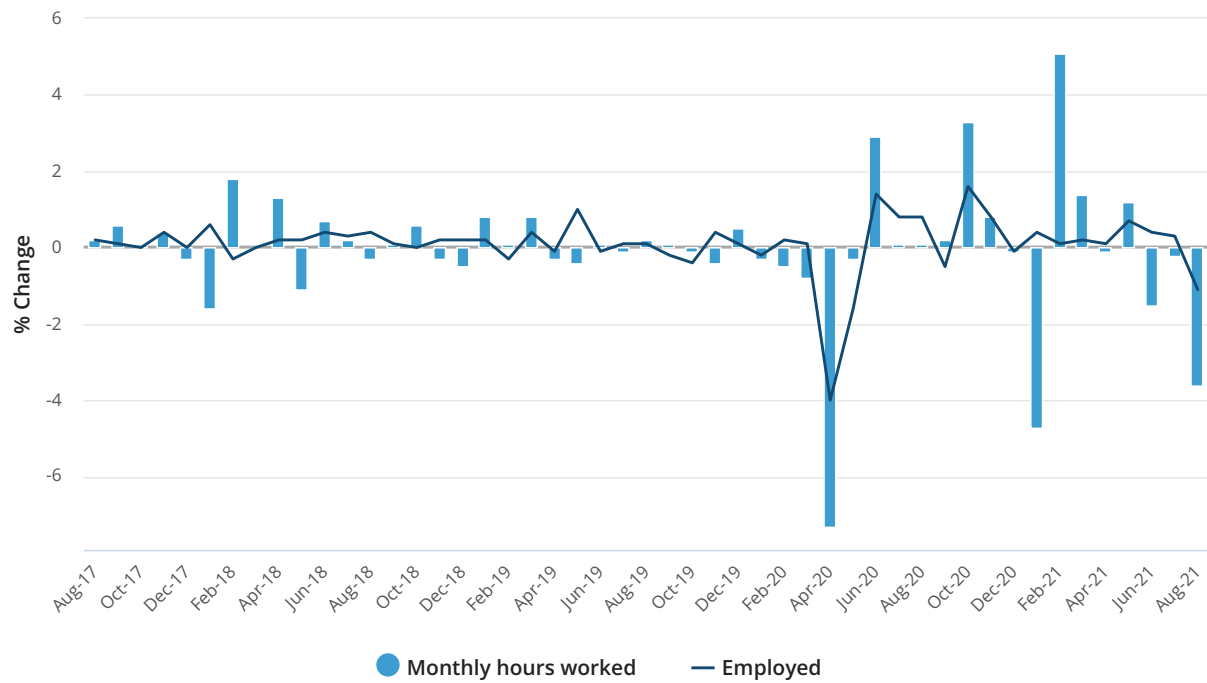
Chart 2: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

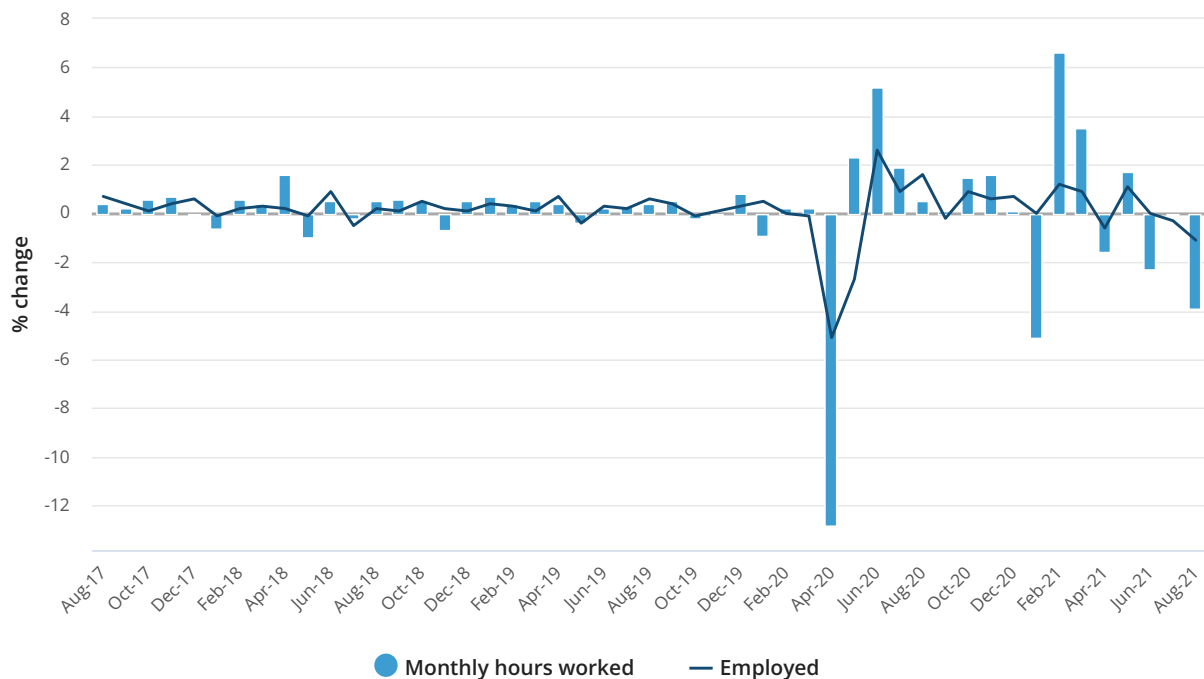
## Changes in employment and hours worked for men and women

Table 2a: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Males, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

**Table 2b: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Females, Seasonally adjusted**



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

## States and territories

Chart 3 shows the changes in monthly hours worked for each of the states and territories, indexed to March 2020. Over the COVID period, hours worked have been impacted by a series of lockdowns and other restrictions. This was again evident in changes in hours worked across many of the states and territories, including the three most populous states of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.

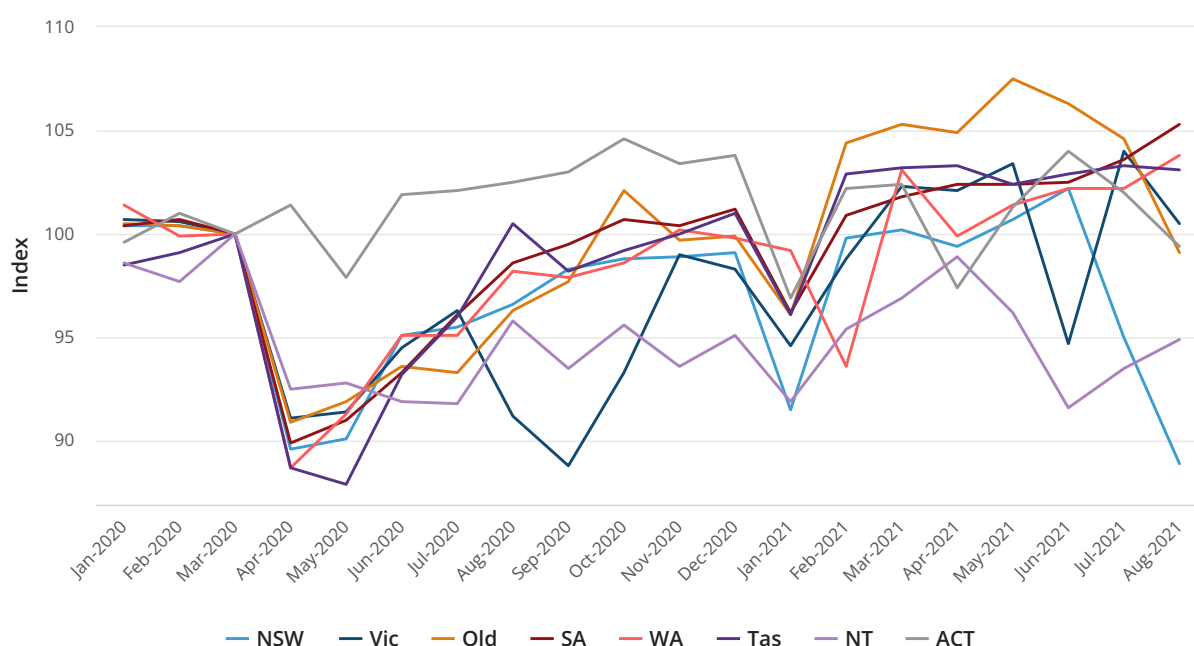
Monthly hours worked for New South Wales fell by 34.9 million hours (6.5%) between July and August, following the 7.0% fall between June and July, and were 11.1% lower than March 2020.

Monthly hours worked in Victoria fell by 16.2 million hours (3.4%) between July and August 2021, and were 0.5% higher than March 2020.

Monthly hours worked in Queensland fell by 19.3 million hours (5.3%) between July and August 2021 and were 0.9% lower than March 2020.

The Northern Territory has remained consistently below its March 2020 level, which partly reflects its employment and hours worked coming off a recent peak at that time, together with the inherent variability in its seasonally adjusted data.

**Chart 3: Monthly hours worked index, states and territories, seasonally adjusted (March 2020 = 100)**



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 19 and 19a

## People working fewer hours

Chart 4 shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in August 2021:

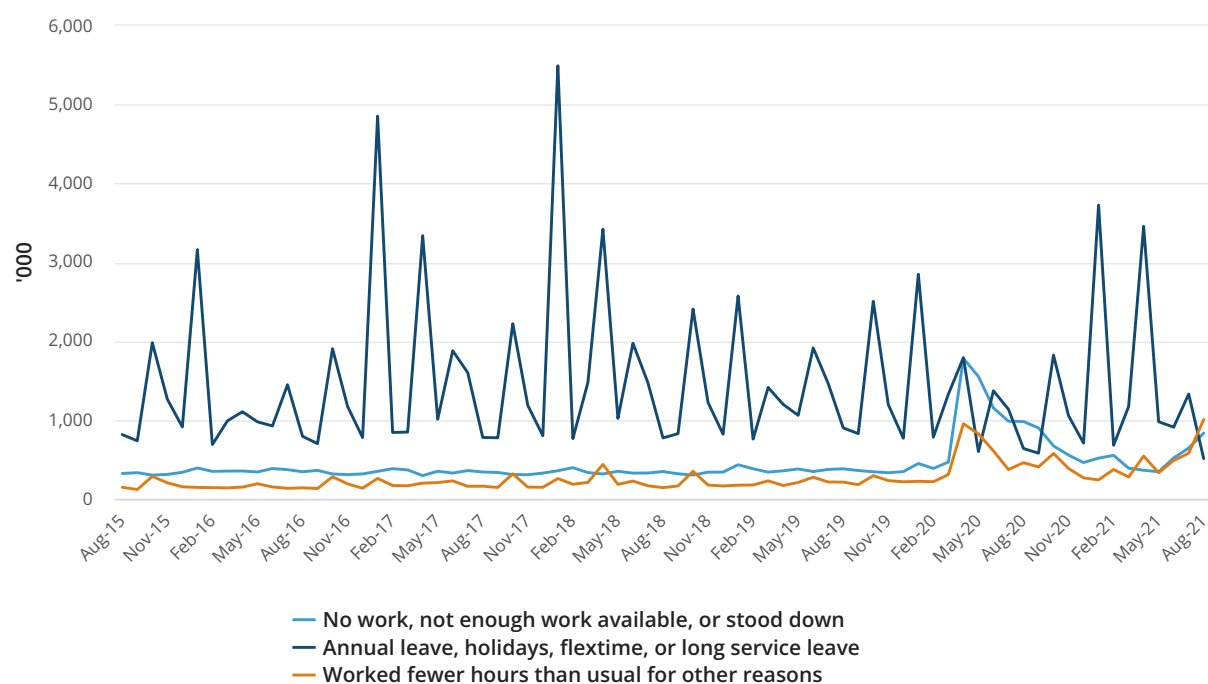
- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 510,200 people.
- due to economic reasons - which was 833,800 people. This was an increase of 189,100 from July 2021.

- due to other reasons - which was 1,005,500 people. This was an increase of 427,300 from July 2021.

When assessing the impacts of lockdowns, it is important to consider larger than seasonal changes in people reporting 'economic reasons' (that is, people reporting having no work, not enough work or being stood down) and 'other reasons'. People reporting other reasons has increased during periods of lockdowns, indicating that some respondents feel that the longstanding categories do not fully capture the complexity of the restrictions and/or that it is difficult for them to attribute the reasons to a single category.

In addition to economic reasons and other reasons, some people who are impacted by lockdowns may also report different reasons, such as taking annual leave or holidays or using flextime during the lockdown period. All reasons are available from data cubes EM2a and EM2b.

**Chart 4: People working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all, Original**

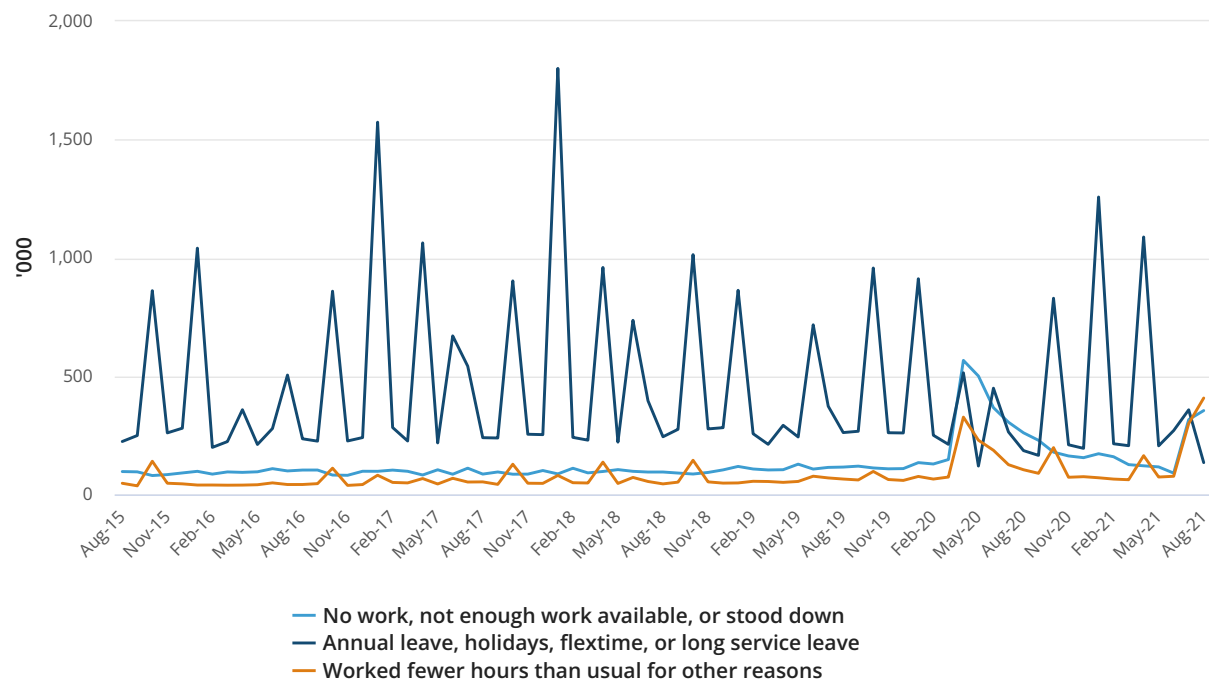


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2a

Chart 4a shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in August 2021 in New South Wales:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 134,600 people.
- due to economic reasons - which was 354,600 people. This was an increase of 38,000 from July 2021.
- due to other reasons - which was 407,600 people. This was an increase of 107,600 from July 2021.

Chart 4a: People working fewer than their usual hours in New South Wales, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

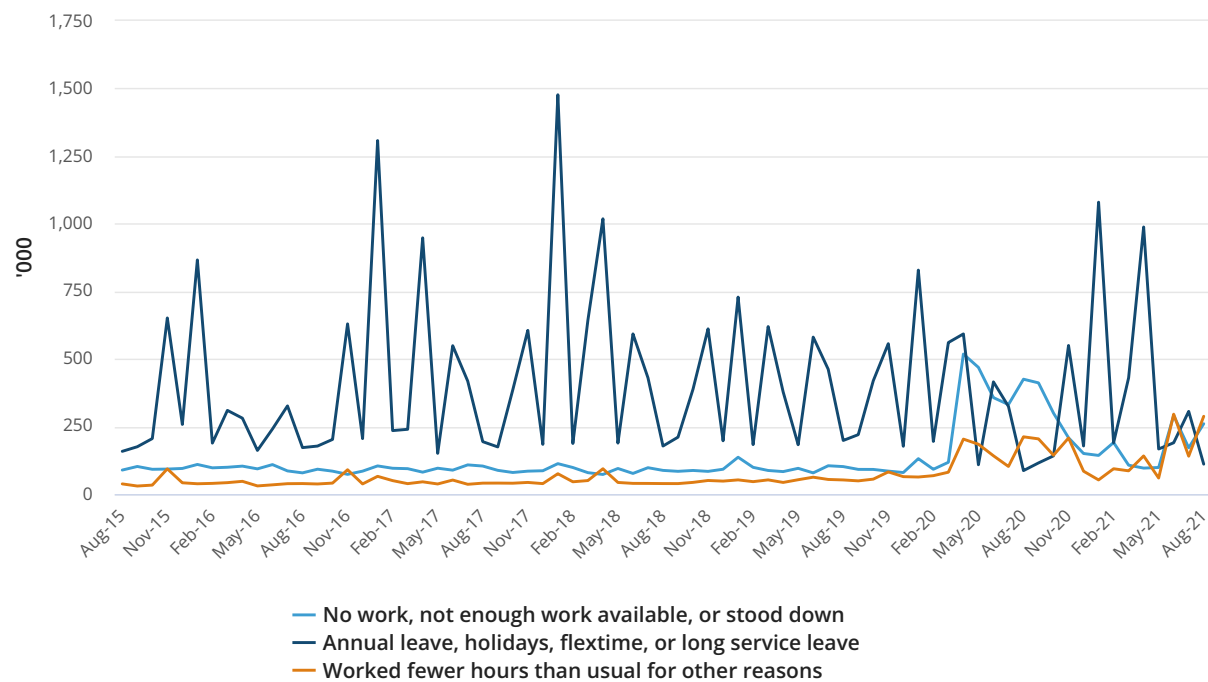
Chart 4b shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in August 2021 in Victoria:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 110,600 people.



- due to economic reasons - which was 260,100 people. This was an increase of 89,100 from July 2021.
- due to other reasons - which was 287,600 people. This was an increase of 147,500 from July 2021.

Chart 4b: People working fewer than their usual hours in Victoria, Original

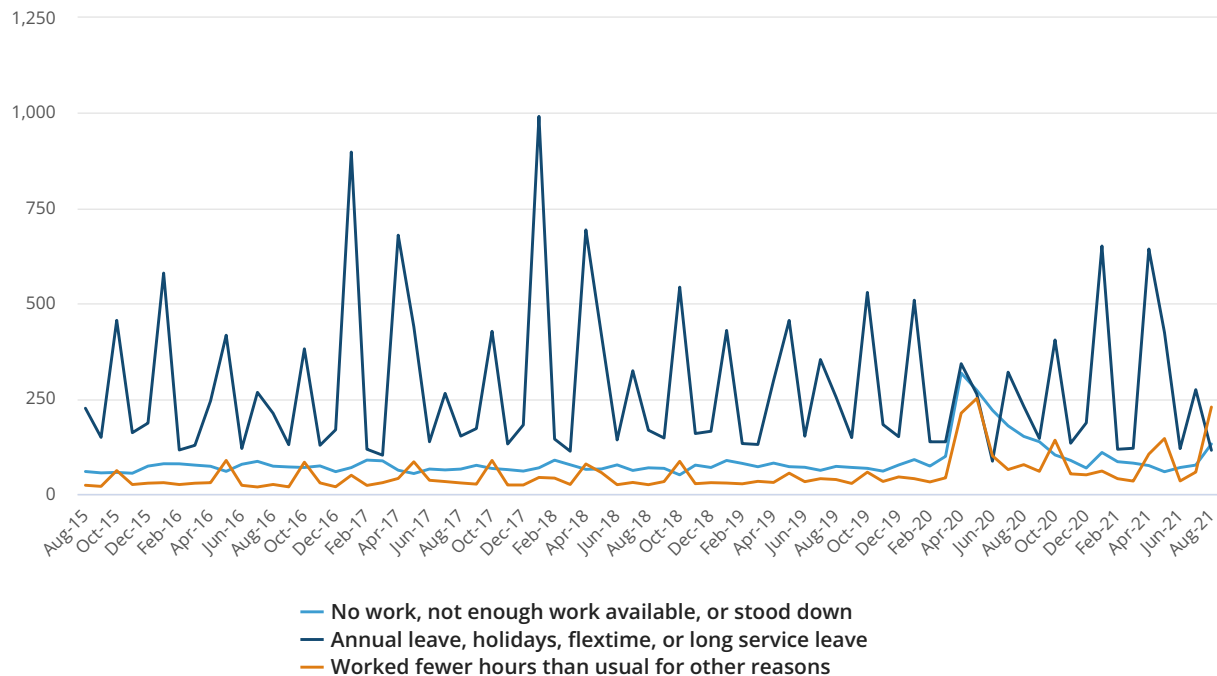


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 4c shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in August 2021 in Queensland:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 114,500 people.
- due to economic reasons - which was 131,100 people. This was an increase of 55,500 from July 2021.
- due to other reasons - which was 228,100 people. This was an increase of 170,800 from July 2021.

Chart 4c: People working fewer than their usual hours in Queensland,

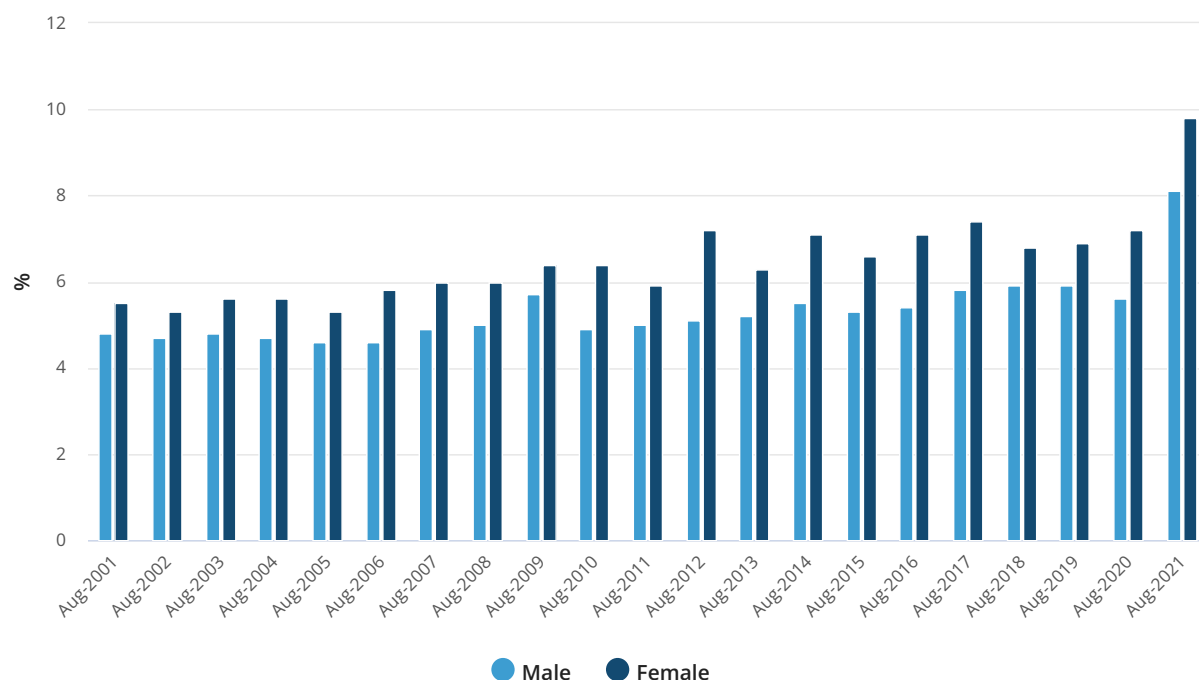


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

## People working zero hours

Chart 5 shows the proportion of employed people who worked zero hours in August over the past 20 years. 8.9% of employed people worked zero hours in August 2021 (10.7% in New South Wales, 8.2% in Victoria, and 10.4% in Queensland).

Chart 5: Proportion of employed working zero hours, Original

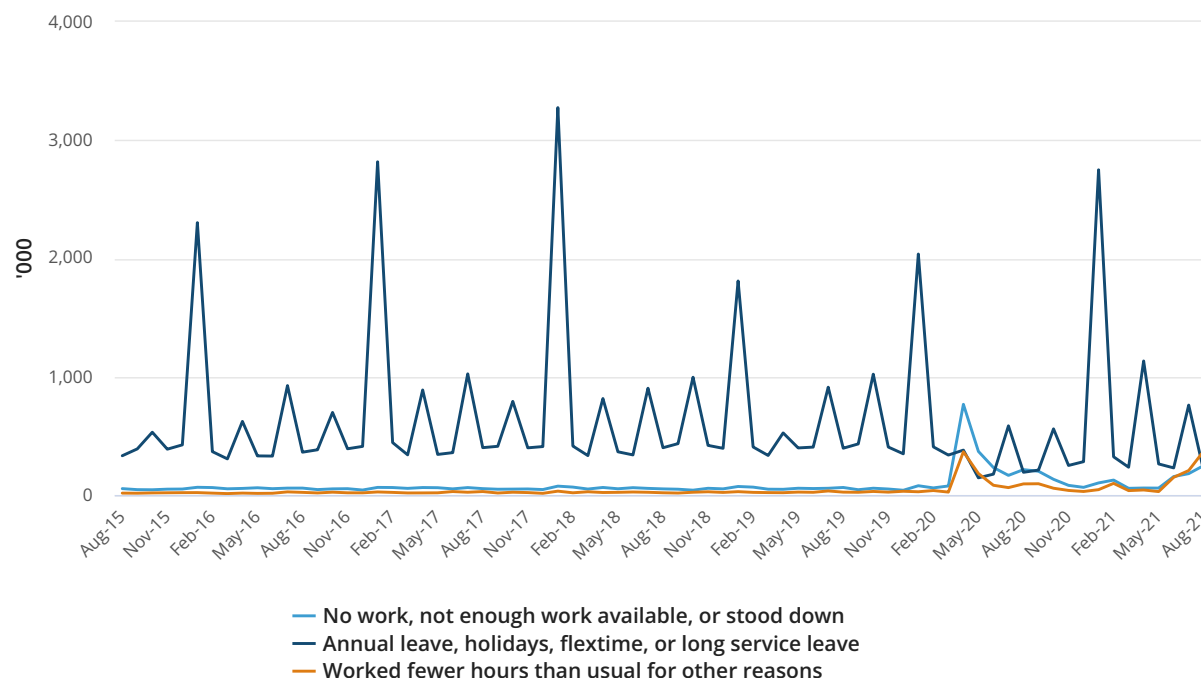


Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

Chart 6 shows the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons, due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave and due to other reasons. As with people working fewer hours, there is a distinct seasonal pattern to people taking leave, with large increases each January and during school holiday periods. In August 2021:

- 203,700 employed people worked zero hours due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave.
- 248,900 employed people worked zero hours for economic reasons. This was an increase of 68,400 from July 2021, and the highest since May 2020.
- 371,300 employed people worked zero hours for other reasons. This was an increase of 164,500 from July 2021, and the highest since April 2020.

Chart 6: Employed people working zero hours, Original

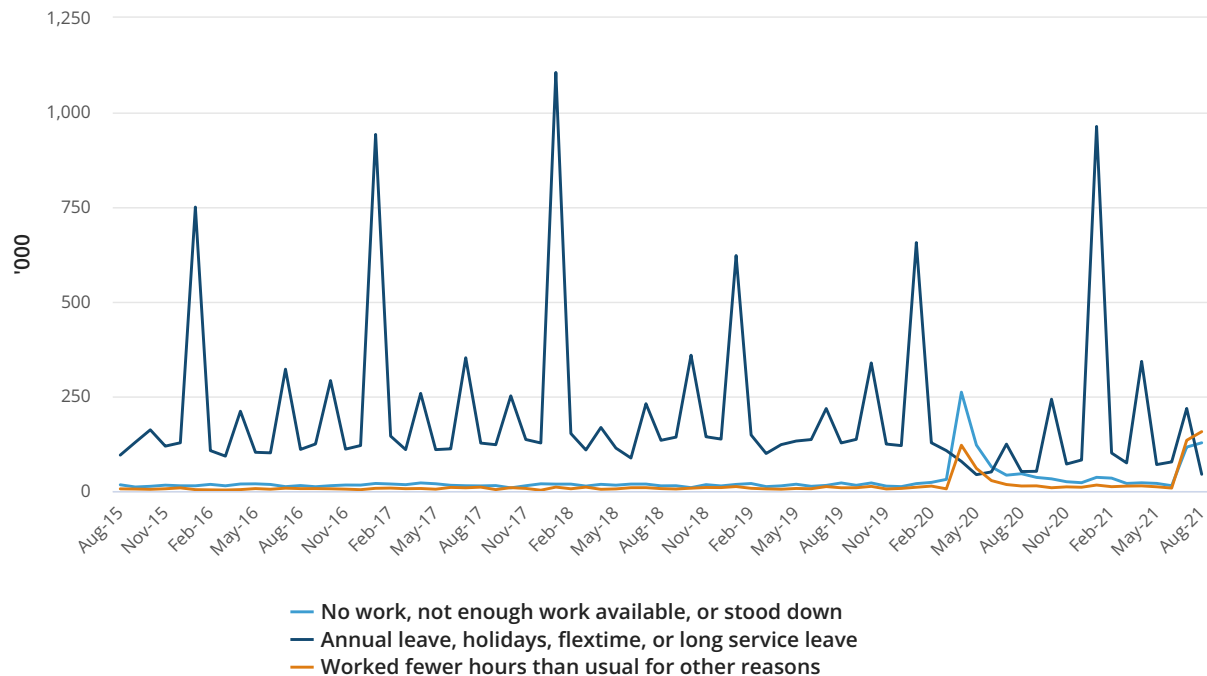


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2a

Chart 6a shows the number of employed people who worked zero hours in New South Wales in August 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 44,100 people.
- due to economic reasons - which was 127,400 people. This was an increase of 11,400 from July 2021, and the highest since April 2020.
- due to other reasons - which was 156,800 people. This was an increase of 22,900 from July 2021, and the highest recorded.

Chart 6a: Employed people working zero hours in New South Wales, Original

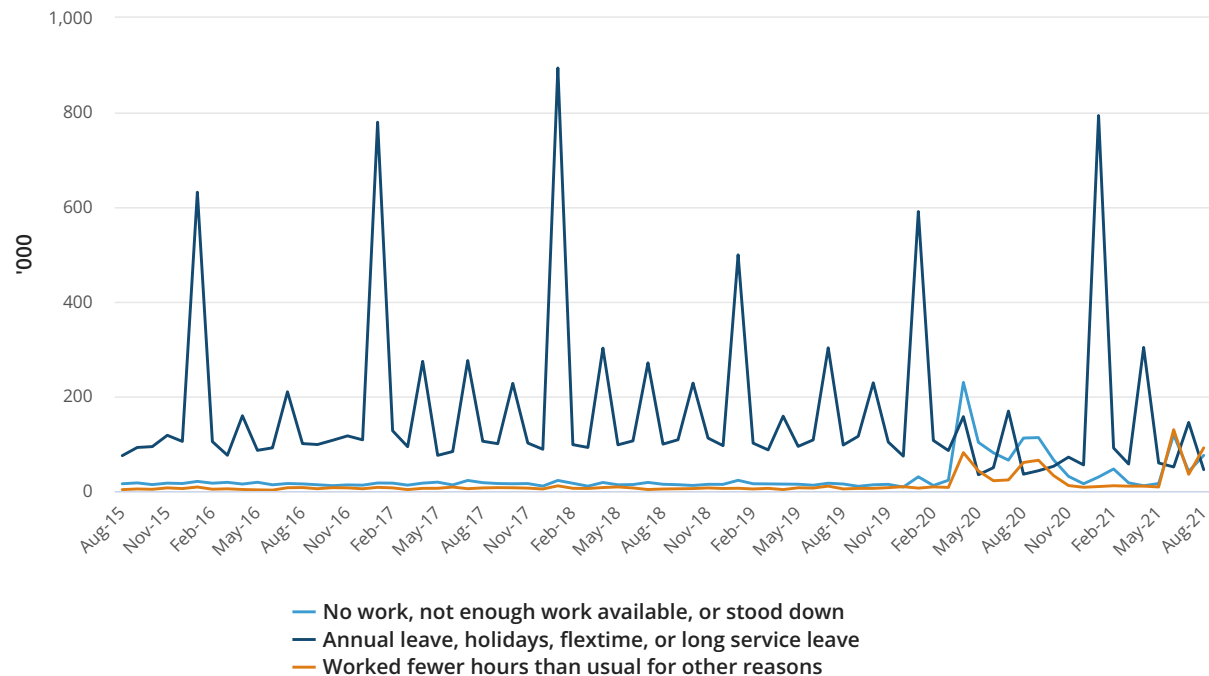


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 6b shows the number of employed people who worked zero hours in Victoria in August 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flexitime, or long service leave - which was 45,100 people.
- due to economic reasons - which was 75,300 people. This was an increase of 34,000 from July 2021.
- due to other reasons - which was 91,200 people. This was an increase of 56,000 from July 2021.

Chart 6b: Employed people working zero hours in Victoria, Original

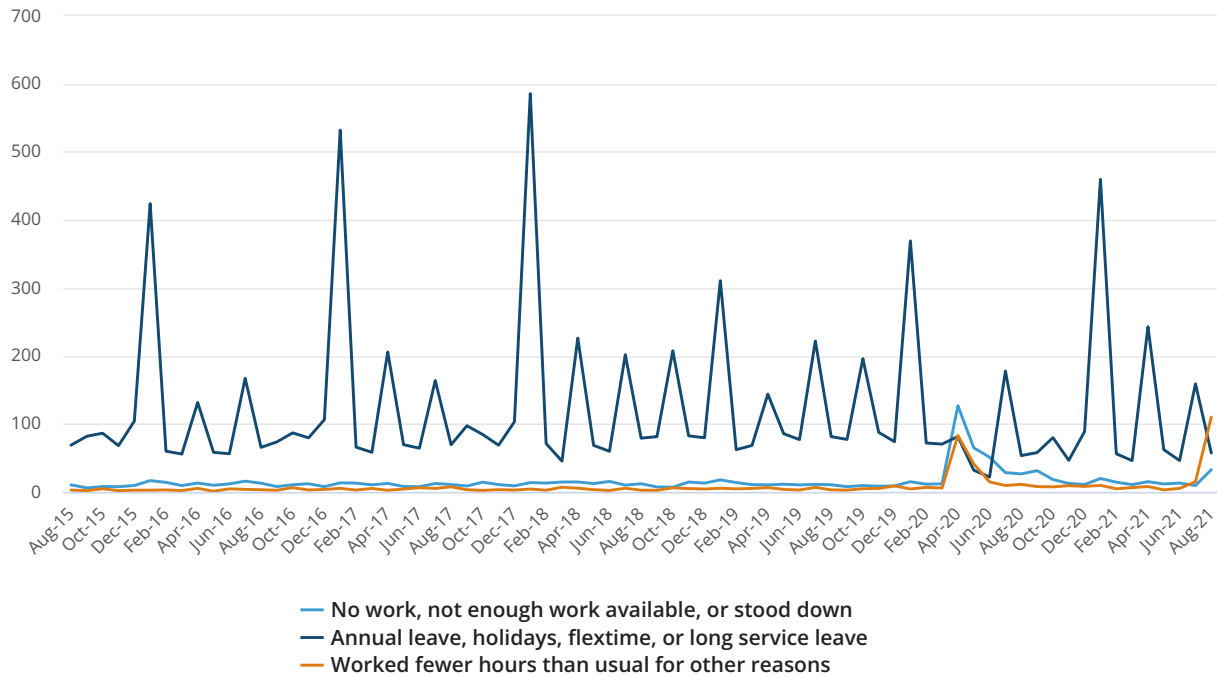


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 6c shows the number of employed people who worked zero hours in Queensland in August 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flexitime, or long service leave - which was 57,100 people.
- due to economic reasons - which was 32,800 people. This was an increase of 23,500 from July 2021, and the highest since June 2020.
- due to other reasons - which was 110,000 people. This was an increase of 95,100 from July 2021, and the highest recorded.

Chart 6c: Employed people working zero hours in Queensland, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

For further information, email [labour.statistics@abs.gov.au](mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au)  
(<mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au>).